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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8304
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4604
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 7583
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 7393
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 1024
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU PRIORITY 8941
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY 5804
RUESLE/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI PRIORITY 8344
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG PRIORITY 4945
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 000324

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MA MUST BE PRACTICAL

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan, Reason(s):
1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: (KMT) Chairman Ma Ying-jeou is being forced to face political reality, according to one advisor. Although he has insisted he is clean and deeply committed to cleaning up KMT politics, Ma is finding he must pragmatically maintain connections with unsavory local politicians who can deliver needed votes. End Summary.

¶2. (C) KMT-affiliated National Policy Foundation (NPF) official Tsai Cheng-wen told AIT that KMT Chairman Ma, renowned for his political integrity, is being forced by circumstances to be pragmatic. Tsai noted that Ma, Honorary KMT Chairman Lien Chan, and KMT LY Speaker Wang Jin-pyng recently attended a wedding banquet hosted by notorious gangster, convicted criminal, and independent legislator Yen Chin-piao. According to Tsai, Ma had little choice but to attend -- Yen is the chief power broker in Taichung County, and he can deliver votes. Failing to attend, Tsai explained, would be perceived as an insult, and would give the DPP an opportunity to make political inroads in Taichung.

¶3. (C) Comment: Ma's decision to attend a wedding banquet hosted by a tainted political figure reveals an aspect of Ma's political character we first saw in the recent election campaign: though committed to confronting the vested interests of many of the KMT's senior leaders and root out corruption and dirty-money politics, Ma is being forced to sometimes deal pragmatically with unsavory politicians if it will help the KMT win. Ma, for example, helped Hsu Tsai-li win the December 2005 Keelung mayoral election, even though Tsai was under investigation for profiteering and even though

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Ma himself had prosecuted Tsai for corruption a decade earlier when Ma was Minister of Justice. To Ma's approbation and relief, Hsu resigned his KMT membership when he was charged with corruption just after winning the Keelung mayorship. Ma, who will stump for KMT candidates in the December 2006 Taipei-Kaohsiung mayoral races and the December 2007 legislative elections, must maneuver carefully between his squeaky-clean image and political pragmatism. End comment.
SHELLSMITH